

東大過去問 2022年 第1問

以下の英文を読み、その内容を70~80字の日本語で要約せよ。句読点も字数に含める。

Table manners are as old as human society itself, the reason being that no human society can exist without them. The active sharing of food — not consuming all the food we find on the spot, but carrying some back home and then giving it out systematically — is believed, even nowadays, to lie at the root of what makes us different from animals. Birds, dogs, and hyenas carry home food for their young until they are ready to find for themselves, and chimpanzees may even demand and receive pieces of meat from other adults in their group. (Chimpanzees apparently exhibit this behaviour only on the occasions when they consume meat; their main, vegetable diet they almost invariably eat where they find it, without sharing.) Only people actively, regularly, and continuously work on the distribution of their food.

This activity is based on and probably helped give rise to many basic human characteristics, such as family and community (who belongs with whom; which people eat together), language (for discussing food past, present, and future, for planning the acquisition of food, and deciding how to divide it while preventing fights), technology (how to kill, cut, keep, and carry), and morality (what is a fair portion?). The basic need of our stomachs for food continues to supply a good deal of the driving force behind all of human enterprise: we have to hunt for food, fight for it, find it, or sow it and wait for it to be ready; we then have to transport it, and distribute it before it goes rotten. It is in addition easier for us to consume food chopped, ground, cooked, or left to soften. Civilization itself cannot begin until a food supply is assured. And where food is concerned we can never stop; appetite keeps us at it.

The active sharing out of what we are going to eat is only the beginning. We cannot help being choosy about our food: preference enters into every mouthful we consume. We play with food, show off with it, honor and despise it. The main rules about eating are simple: if you do not eat you die; and no matter how large your dinner, you will soon be hungry again. Precisely because we must both eat and keep on eating, human beings have poured enormous effort into making food more than itself, so that it bears multiple meanings beyond its primary purpose of physical nutrition.